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ABSTRACT

The Educational Passport is a service that is being developed at the Educational Testing Service for students or other individuals in order to facilitate their entry to school or college or employment. The Passport is an accumulative record that the individual prepares and owns and uses. At the Educational Testing Service, photographed documents supplied by the individual, and by institutions at the individual's request, and a wallet-sized piece of microfiche containing all the documents is produced. The individual receives his records along with the Passport, and ETS forwards copies of the Passport to institutions the individual designates. Once a passport has been prepared, the individual does not need to gather all his records together each time he wishes to present his credentials. Consequently, much work is eliminated for all concerned. Passports can be brought up to date easily whenever the individual so requests. (Author/KE)

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THE EDUCATIONAL PASSPORT

John Summerskill
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The Educational Passport is a service which is being developed at the Educational Testing Service for students or other individuals in order to facilitate their entry to school or college or employment.

In simplest terms, the Passport is an accumulative record of an individual's educational and other accomplishments, a record which the individual prepares and owns and uses. At the Educational Testing Service, we photograph documents supplied by the individual, and by institutions at the individual's request, and we produce a wallet-sized piece of microfiche containing all the documents. The individual receives his records back along with the Passport, and ETS forwards copies of the Passport to other institutions which the individual designates. Once a Passport has been prepared, the individual does not need to gather all his records together each time he wishes to present his credentials. Consequently, much busy work is eliminated for all concerned. Passports can be brought up to date easily whenever the individual so requests.

The initial idea came from our participation in the work of the Commission on Nontraditional Study whose chairman, Sam Gould, spoke to this conference this morning. Additionally, we had before us all the information collected by another conference speaker, John Valley, director of the Office of New Degree Programs at ETS. From this work we saw the high mobility of the American student pursuing postsecondary education. We saw a dramatic increase in the number of Americans engaged in recurrent

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and continuing education. We saw a new interest on the part of colleges and universities in providing instruction at times and in places convenient for students who are employed, or married, or in the military services. We saw a growing willingness to recognize and grant credit for learning which takes place outside the classroom.

These emerging characteristics of postsecondary education in the 1970's indicated a need for a process by which individuals could accumulate and present their educational accomplishments as they move from school to college, college to college, college to job, and job to college. Fortunately the Lilly Endowment also recognized this need and a year ago made a grant of $100,000 to ETS to begin development of the Passport.

During the past year we have undertaken three major developmental activities:

1. We further defined the Passport concept, and we developed guidelines and procedures for preparing Passports.
2. We discovered some technical problems and invented some technical solutions.
3. We investigated various potential uses of the Passport, and we obtained reactions to the service from a variety of individuals.

With respect to concept and procedures, a year ago I said (publicly, alas!) that the Passport "is an idea whose time has come." Now, from a year's experience, we know that the Passport idea is more complex than we originally thought; the idea is more powerful; and probably the idea is more useful than earlier envisioned.

Regarding complexity, the first thought was that a single Passport system would accommodate anyone and everyone. We have learned from field trials in various situations that the Passport service has to function somewhat differently among military servicemen, among regular high school students, among adult part-time students, and so on. Thus, for example, we are presently exploring a separate Credit Assembly Service which would provide servicemen with a summary of their college credits following the guidelines of CASE, the American Council on Education's Office of Academic Credit, and other academic agencies.

The Passport idea sometimes brings strong reactions, positive or negative, from people in the educational world. This is due in part to the underlying assumption that the individual can own and control his or her academic records. Consequently, the Passport is seen by some as representing a further shift of academic authority from the institution to the individual. This has led to much discussion about the "authenticity" of the Passport.

We had some early awareness that the Passport was both a complex and powerful idea, so we formed a National Advisory Council to consider the issues of authenticity and other critical matters. This committee is composed of experienced people from two-year and four-year colleges, educational associations, business, and labor. The committee met three times this past year, they contributed a great deal of useful criticism and counsel, and we believe we have reasonable and trustworthy guidelines to protect the individual's rights to privacy and the authenticity of the records.

This past year we also learned that the Passport is useful in ways which we had not predicted. For example, students in nontraditional programs often produce voluminous portfolios or protocols, and these are difficult to handle and examine when the individual moves to another college or job. The Passport greatly simplifies the transmittal and storage of this information, and, because each Passport contains an index, retrieval of information from the portfolio is facilitated.

The Passport is a photographic rather than a computer process, so that it can accommodate qualitative material, e.g., references, work logs, course descriptions, etc., which provide a richer picture of the individual. When Passports were used this past spring by recruiters from business and industry, they found that their interviews with candidates were more interesting and productive.

At the outset of this presentation today I observed that we had some technical problems to solve. William Kraft of ETS designed a wallet-sized microfiche which contains the equivalent of 24 standard pages of material. Mr. Kraft has worked closely with commercial firms to make available an inexpensive microfiche viewer so that each Passport owner can easily review his own microfiche material at any time. We believe that such a viewer will soon be available.

The third major developmental activity, with Jack Osander of ETS in the lead, was to obtain the reactions of various individuals and groups concerning Passport procedures. We have conducted a number of field trials, and we have learned, for example, that a wide variety of students, and others, are enthusiastic about the Passport idea. However, preparing

a Passport requires more work of the individual than meets the eye. Materials must be collected from a number of sources, decisions must be made about what to include and in what order, an index must be prepared, etc. Consequently, as with many things in life, individuals are more likely to follow Passport procedures to completion when they see a concrete application or reward for the effort. Individuals need assurance that schools, colleges and employers will, in fact, look at their Passports and use them.

Another outcome of the field trials was the discovery that people can use microfiche viewers with little or no training or instruction. We learned, for example, that job recruiters easily make use of desk-top viewers while interviewing students, and the hardware does not get in the way of the human interview process. The field trials also enabled us to improve the written instructions for Passport preparation and provided initial experience in the production process.

In the academic year 1975-76 we would very much like to conduct further field trials with larger numbers of people. Thus we look forward to a joint effort with a number of Servicemen's Opportunity Colleges and selected military bases in which ETS provides servicemen with Passports which can be used for college admissions, placement, and counselling. We are also looking for colleges and universities where experimental usage of the Passport can take place--with no charge to the individuals or the institutions during the trial period. Those interested should write to Sybil Stokes, who is Passport program director at ETS in Princeton.

Finally, the experimental work with Passports in job recruiting and placement at Northeastern University was sufficiently successful to call for more extended use next year.

If all goes well we hope that the Educational Passport will be available across the country a year from now.

Thank you.

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